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PP RUEHFK
DE RUEHKO #0577/01 0330444
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 020444Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8118
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI//N541// PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA// PRIORITY
RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 4348
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 7407
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0332
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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS
- TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Thursday morning papers front-paged follow-up stories on the alleged bid-rigging scandal involving senior Japan Defense Facilities Administration Agency (JDFAA) officials, with Asahi and Yomiuri articles alleging that the collusive practice also occurred in a runway extension project at the US Marine Corps Air Station in Iwakuni.

11. All six dailies carried editorials concerning President Bush's State of the Union address.

12. "Continued US Commitment to the World Reconfirmed" An editorial in the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri commented (2/2): "The 'prescription' President Bush wrote for the difficult issues facing the US took on an optimistic tone. In his State of the Union address, the president defined this year as one that would determine the future of the US, pledging that America would exercise strong leadership to protect its security and prosperity.... Without a positive US commitment, global security and the world economic order cannot be maintained...."

13. "Expectations for the president have been dropping, as he registered only 39 percent approval in an opinion poll conducted the day of the speech, the lowest level of his presidency.... This low support reflects public frustration over the president's failure to take effective measures to deal with many unresolved issues. With three years remaining in office, Mr. Bush's handling of Iraq and the economy holds the key to regaining support for his administration."

14. "Can President Bush Regain Support by Tackling

Domestic Issues?" The liberal Asahi editorialized (2/2): "... The Bush administration has suffered a series of setbacks over the past year. President Bush proudly declared that the US is winning the war in Iraq. But though there has been progress in the creation of a political system there, including a new constitution and parliamentary elections, armed insurgents persist in their attacks, and the number of US casualties continues to grow. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the radical Palestinian group Hamas, which calls for armed struggle against Israel, has won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council, raising global tensions....

15. "Considering these developments, it is understandable that public support for Mr. Bush in his second term mirrors that of then-President Nixon in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal. The ruling Republican Party may lose control of Congress if the president remains unable to deal effectively with these and other issues ahead of the mid-term elections this fall. Mr. Bush may become a 'lame duck' sooner than expected. To regain the ground he has lost, Mr. Bush time and again emphasized in the speech that the US would maintain its competitiveness. We wonder whether his speech was intended to strike a new note on domestic policy while placing on the backburner foreign policy initiatives that have failed to produce positive results."

16. "State of the Union Address Looks Beyond War in Iraq" An editorial in the business-oriented Nihon Keizai opined (2/2): "While President Bush's State of the Union address sounded like a repetition of his call for international

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cooperation and solidarity to spread freedom and democracy and fight the war on terrorism, it was at the same time different from his previous addresses in that he stressed the need for the US to wean itself from its excessive dependence on petroleum imported from unstable countries in the Middle East and elsewhere.

17. "President Bush also called China and India 'new competitors,' pointing out the need to strengthen US competitiveness. It is clear that President Bush has crafted a strategy of maintaining US supremacy as the US moves forward with the war on terrorism, which has entered the middle stage.... A Gallup poll unveiled on January 31 showed 58 percent of respondents saying that Bush's second term is 'not going well.' The fact that the president is viewed so harshly at a time when the economy is not doing badly almost certainly reflects public dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq."

SCHIEFFER